

was decided by the Vice President of the United States, and it was the right thing to do.

I hope that this will not continue to be a partisan issue, that we will do the right thing in the House of Representatives. That, in fact, we will be able to add the same amendments to the Juvenile Justice Authorization, and lacking those amendments, that we will be able to at least add them to the appropriations bill on Treasury and Postal Operations.

It is long past time. Thousands of people have died because we have not been willing to stand up to the kind of political bullying that comes from many in the gun lobby.

Mr. Speaker, we should not miss this opportunity to focus on this very serious problem in our society. We must start to do the right thing legislatively. We must stop this violence. I am not suggesting that to take away guns is a magic bullet. But I am suggesting that when we went to school, we had the same kind of psychological problems with peers and girlfriends and so on, but we did not have dead victims as a result. We might have done silly things, but gosh, we did not have access to guns; we did not shoot people, we did not leave people dead in a pool of blood. And that is happening because guns are much too easily accessible to our young people who do not have the maturity to be able to use them. We ought to increase the age of accessibility to guns, we ought to put safety locks on guns, and we ought to reduce the proliferation of them, whether it be through pawnshops or through gun shows or retail or wholesale or whatever. The time has long since passed for us to take the lead in this very serious issue and restore a civil society and reduce the violence that is prevalent throughout this American Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman from Michigan taking this time to speak about school violence. School violence is a reflection of society. This is an important issue. We ought to be addressing it today.

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, realizing my time has expired, I once again would just like to thank the Speaker for his courtesies here tonight and understand that of course that as we address this issue, it is more than just guns, but things are happening in communities, in schools and in homes, and we invite Democrats and Republicans to come together and address this in a bipartisan manner

A GREATER QUALITY OF LIFE FOR AMERICA'S DEFENDERS

THE SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentlewoman from Idaho (Mrs. CHENOWETH) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, I found it interesting, the comments tonight on Kosovo. It is my firm belief that we are involved in an illegal war. We speak glowingly about the rule of law, and yet the Constitution requires that the Congress raise up armies and declare war. The War Powers Act clearly defines the limits within which the President may engage in war-like activities such as we have become involved in in Kosovo. The U.N. charter requires that no Nation see this kind of violent activity in a sovereign manner when there is internal conflict. So I do not care where one looks, whether it is international law, constitutional law, or statutory authority, this is an illegal war.

As we think about the war in Kosovo, Mr. Speaker, I want us today, as we begin to approach the time when we remember the veterans, the men and women who have served so bravely overseas, as we begin to enter into that season in our year, I want us to think about them and not forget them. Because in today's military, a young enlisted person serving out his or her first contract can expect to make only \$1,075.80 a month. Over a 40-hour work week, this averages to \$6.70 an hour. But most of our military personnel do not work 40-hour work weeks. We all remember the famous army slogan: We do more before 9 o'clock a.m. than most people do all day. Well, Mr. Speaker, it is true. These young enlisted personnel can expect to be at work before first light and not home again until long after dark.

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Mr. Speaker, we do not pay them overtime. These young people train for weeks at a time away from home. They keep themselves in a state of top physical readiness, and they live their personal lives according to the high standards of integrity and honor we mandate for them. These young servicemen and women must uproot their families on a moment's notice, moving to a new duty station across the country or across the globe. A lot of them do it for as little as \$6.70 an hour.

For members of the military with families, the situation is even worse. Despite a modest living allowance, 12,000 families currently serving our armed forces are dependent upon food stamps, food stamps. We have government employees living off of government subsidies. Mr. Speaker, why do we not skip the intermediary step and just pay them properly in the first place?

During the holidays at the Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho, a network of military spouses work together to collect donations of money and toys for the enlisted families who cannot afford to give their young ones Christmas or Thanksgiving.

Last November and December, the Mountain Home Warm Heart organiza-

tion, run by the spouses of servicemen, distributed over \$18,000 worth of food and toys and cash to needy military families.

Where did this money come from, Mr. Speaker? From the pockets of servicemen who already had very little to give. If this were not bad enough, many military families have more serious concerns than just Christmas and Thanksgiving.

At the Mountain Home Air Force Base, 459 women and children are receiving regular food assistance. That is not a proud record for us. One hundred and seven of those are infants. The Mountain Home Air Force Aid Society made \$131,000 in emergency assistance loans to military families. I am very concerned about what will happen to these families when the money runs out and they still have to make monthly payments on their loans.

In the 18th century, citizen soldiers won our independence and secured our liberties. We hailed them as heroes, and revered the courage and commitment they demonstrated in defense of our Nation. Today that Nation is protected by citizen soldiers with the same integrity and that same sense of duty. Only in 20th century America, we do not even pay them a living wage. We should be ashamed of ourselves.

From 1988 to today, there have been 32 deployments of our military. In the previous 60 years, there were only 10 deployments. Put another way, Mr. Speaker, prior to this administration, the military was deployed an average of once every 6 years. During the Clinton administration, the military has been deployed an average of four times every year.

Furthermore, since 1987 we have depleted our ranks by 800,000 servicemen, 800,000 servicemen. In practical terms, that translates into more frequent deployments and dangerously long hours. It is illegal in this country for truck drivers to be on the road longer than 8 consecutive hours without rest. We have pilots now patrolling the Mediterranean in 14-hour shifts.

In short, this administration is expecting our servicemen and women to do 100 times as much and place their lives at risk 100 times as often with 800,000 fewer people for as little as \$6.70 an hour.

Mr. Speaker, I recently paid a plumber \$90 an hour to unplug my garbage disposal. An auto mechanic can expect \$50 an hour. A teenage person working as a bagger in a grocery store can earn up to \$12 an hour. None of these jobs requires 24-hour dedication to duty and a constant threat to their lives.

Mr. Speaker, one young Marine I know of has taken a second job to supplement his income. Every night this Lance Corporal goes home and trades his Marine uniform for a blue and red tee shirt and matching hat from Dominoes. This young Marine, this hard-

working father of two, delivers pizza because he is too proud to accept welfare.

He is not alone in this endeavor, but it is nearly impossible to know how many young servicemen are in this position, because most of them hide it from their commanders.

A young Lance Corporal serving in the Marine Corps today can anticipate being combat-deployed at least once in a 4-year enlistment. I wonder what this Lance Corporal's family will do when he is away and they have to make do without the supplemental income from Dominoes? I am humbled by this young Marine, and many others like him who work so hard to protect us. I am ashamed that we do not do right by them.

I urge this body to seriously consider the ethics of our government's continued overextension of our military in light of our complete lack of gratitude for their service.

Mr. Speaker, I have a request to make of the Members of this body. Tonight, when they go home to their families and when we go to the security and comfort of our own homes, when we tuck our young children in bed and say a prayer, we need to say a prayer for the men and women of our armed forces.

As we sleep, approximately 100,000 of them stand watch away from their own loved ones, ready to give their very lives to protect us, for as little as \$6.70 an hour.

Mr. Speaker, I think this Congress must begin to understand that there is a direct correlation between the effectiveness of active duty military today and the treatment of the veterans of yesterday's service. Retention, morale, readiness, these words are euphemisms used to disguise the real problem our military faces: A complete lack of faith that their government will take good care of them.

Why should our active duty servicemen believe us? Veterans in my district are feeling the effects of cuts in the veterans budgets. Veterans hospitals in Salt Lake City and Spokane are suffering from cutbacks and layoffs which impact patient care, as well as those hospitals, veterans hospitals, in Boise, Idaho. There are waiting lists for surgery and fewer options for long-term care. We have broken our promises.

A sign in front of the Boise Veterans' Medical Center reads "The price of freedom is visible here." But indeed, it is. Unfortunately, in our society, a select few pay that price. They are our veterans. They are our heroes, and they must fight for the health care benefits that we promised them.

We expected our veterans to fight for us abroad, but it breaks my heart when they have to come home and fight for their privileges that were promised them at home.

Mr. Speaker, veterans are forced into one final choice between their home and their patriotism. No Idaho veteran may be laid to rest in his home State in a dedicated field of honor. That is because my home State is the only State in the Union which does not have a veterans cemetery.

Veterans represent approximately 10 percent of Idaho's population. There are nearly 100,000 combat veterans in Idaho, about a third of whom served our Nation in World War II. Our average World War II veteran is 76 years old. These heroes are now passing away. This summer when veterans organizations call the roll of those who have died in the last year, they will read 3,500 names in Idaho, and not one will be able to be buried in an Idaho veterans cemetery. There is not an Idaho veterans cemetery.

That is why I am introducing legislation which will provide Idaho with a veterans cemetery. This bill answers a critical need Idaho faces. In pressing for a veterans' cemetery, I have the support of the entire Idaho congressional delegation, the State veterans organizations, our Governor, the Idaho legislature, and the chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP).

In fact, last month, the Idaho legislature passed Joint Memorial No. 1, which urgently requested a veterans cemetery, stating, and I quote, "It is fitting and proper that a grateful Nation should provide a burial site within a reasonable distance from the homes of those Idahoans and others residing in the northwestern States who honorably served their country in a time of emergency."

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe this case can be overstated. We in this body must begin to take very seriously our commitment to the armed forces. We cannot just try to make piecemeal repairs. We must begin to demonstrate a genuine commitment to improve the quality of life for our veterans and our active duty servicemen and women.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I was forced to vote no on the Kosovo emergency supplemental. That was a very painful and difficult vote for me. On the one hand, I hate to pass up a chance to rectify the wrongs brought down on our military in the past 6 years.

I always welcome the chance to give something back to our servicemen, but I cannot fund an illegal war. I cannot condone this military action, this terrible descent into a protracted conflict in which the American people have no stake whatsoever. I care about our troops too much to remain silent as they are led to this battlefield.

Mr. Speaker, last month this body had the opportunity to fulfill its constitutional role and declare war on the people of Kosovo. All but two, all but two 2 Members balked at that final

act. It seems that the only thing this body can agree on in this matter is that the people of Kosovo are not our enemies. Why, then, are we bombing them? Why are we destroying their capital?

I do not understand the answer to this question, Mr. Speaker, and I cannot let the temptation to provide our servicemen their due at this time dissuade me from my obligation to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution.

Had I voted to fund the war I had voted against declaring. I would have compromised the very principles these young people have fought for in the past. I would have voted to violate the Constitution. Worse, Mr. Speaker, this supplemental amounted to nothing less than blackmail. The Members of this body were offered a choice: Support the troops and the beluga whale and the House pages and the University of the District of Columbia and Washington Metropolitan Air Traffic and whatever other random provision was added, or do not support the troops at all. It is a shameful situation, what was added to the so-called emergency supplemental. It is a testament to the way the military has been constantly used by us, improperly used.

The fact is our military is being attacked by its most dangerous opponent, our own civilian command. This Kosovo supplemental was proof that we are not committed enough as a government or powerful enough as a Congress to undo the damage that already has been done. It is time to move from piecemeal repairs after the fact to proper recognition, support, and honor throughout.

In a time when we were threatened, they defended us. In a time when we were afraid, they kept their courage. In a time when we have discarded patriotism, they still salute their flag, honor their Commander in Chief, and serve the ideals of American freedom.

Mr. Speaker, we must show them, our heroes of past conflict and those who stand guard as we speak, that we care, that we are grateful, that we will not fail them.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. DEUTSCH (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for after 3:00 p.m. today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. NAPOLITANO (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of official business in the district.

Mr. STARK (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for after 1:00 p.m. today on account of official business.

Mr. FOLEY (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for after 1:00 p.m. today on account of receiving an honorary doctorate degree from Northwood University.